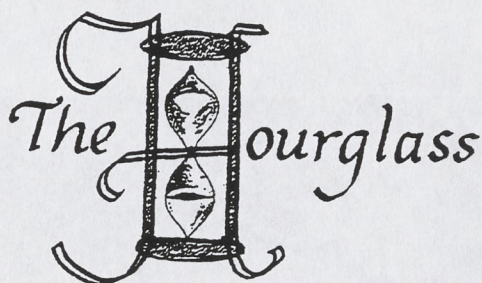


Historical Society of Palm Desert

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Community

Service

Collections

Archives

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PAST IS PROLOGUE - PALM DESERT'S 25th ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations and thanks to the 1998 Community Calendar committee for producing a beautifully illustrated 25th anniversary calendar. Colorful monthly photographs show developments of recent years and natural beauties of the desert. They remind us how the good life in this city is being achieved and needs met for all age groups. Clever design, using strip photos and smaller frames, fill out the theme of progress. Sepia tone historical photos from the archives of our Society give a glimpse of the quarter century preceding cityhood. They are identified on the dark margin at the bottom of each page.

The years following WWII were indeed seminal years in this part of the Coachella Valley. But for the remarkable Henderson brothers, we might be using Palm Village as our return address instead of Palm Desert. To learn more of this fascinating story, please visit Historical Society headquarters in the old fire station. Hours are Mon/Tues/Thurs., 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Seed Money for Preservation of Historical Sites

A letter and check for \$5,000 has been received from Otilie L. Olesen. "Dolly".... charming, generous, kind Dolly as we know her, makes this gift to the Historical Society of Palm Desert in memory of her late husband, Kay Olesen. Her letter says: "As a Riverside County Planning Commissioner for over thirty years, Kay was instrumental in the planning and zoning of all the cove communities and had a deep commitment to the development of Palm Desert. It is my desire that a fund be established with this money to preserve historical sites in this area and have it known as the Kay Olesen Foundation."

The Board of the Society is most grateful for this gift honoring a pioneer who did not merely, in the buzz words of the day, "give back." He GAVE, period. Society archives yield information about some of his many daily/yearly contributions of service. Community betterment always was his goal. Toward that end he gave three decades of service in such positions as President of the Coachella Valley Recreation and Parkway District and member of the Riverside County Planning Commission. He was a lifelong member of Rotary International.

Kay owned a Chrysler-Dodge dealership in Indio. He helped to found and headed the Coachella Valley Savings and Loan Association, a pioneer lending institution which undergirded much of the commercial/residential development of the area. The archives record lighter moments as well. Kay was Commodore of the Desert Beach Yacht Club during the glory days of the Salton Sea when the Power Boat Regattas were held.

A special birthday party in 1969, which Dolly had arranged for him at the Shadow Mountain Club, turned out to be one of the memorable social occasions of the season. Songwriter, Hoagy Carmichael, was there. He joined the Olesen party and entertained the group by singing his favorite compositions and accompanying himself on the piano. Magic moments.....Shadow Mountain was the source of many!

W/S 98

HSPD - PUBLICATIONS - NEWSLETTER

00-00-506



Maria and Roger Keezer at the December
Supervisor's Breakfast at Sun City

Roger's bio, in his own words:

I was born in Everett, Washington on September 23, 1929. Hopefully, the event had no bearing on the fact that the great stock market crash in '29 occurred less than a month later. I had one sibling, a brother.

Mother was of German descent, her grandparents and parents settled in Gleason, Wisconsin. She met my father in Mukilteo, Washington. She was a housewife in an era when it was an affront to the man of the family to have his wife employed outside the home; however, like so many other women during WWII, she worked in national defense at Boeing Aircraft Company helping build the B-17 aircraft.

Father's heritage was Welsh. In the early 1900's his family settled in Mukilteo, a small waterfront town near Everett, Washington. As a young man, he worked at a powder plant. On September 17, 1930 one of the greatest explosions in an inhabited community occurred 6,000 pounds of nitroglycerin and 6,000 cases of dynamite ignited. Windows were shattered for miles around. Miraculously, no lives were lost; but with the power plant gone, my father was out of a job. Dad turned next in his career to tow-boating. He retired as a ships Captain after many years, towing rafts of logs and barges on the rivers and waters of Puget Sound. Many large ships were assisted entering and docking in the Seattle harbor by his skill and experience.

We moved to Seattle from Everett in 1942 to be closer to the Boeing plants where my father worked during WWII. I attended Cleveland High School there, graduating in 1947. At a time when most dropouts from high school entered the military, I finished school because I was too young for that war, being only 15 years old when the war ended in 1945. After graduation my buddies and I joined the Naval Reserve.

After my Naval Reserve duty, and seeking fortune and adventure, I traveled to Anchorage, Alaska in 1956. Working first as a meat cutter and then as the department manager for a local supermarket, my experiences included processing bear, moose, deer, and many caribou; also, wild boar. In addition, there were fish salmon and huge halibut weighing from 100-200 pounds each. For adventure I raced modified stock cars at the nearby Alaska Speedway. Although the seasons were short, summers only, I enjoyed many exciting moments on the half-mile oval paved course.

Memorable Alaskan sights include the breath-taking Aurora Borealis which are northern lights that adorn the entire sky, amazing ice fogs, and wild life like huge moose with six-foot wide antlers. I remember bon fires in the streets when Alaska became a state. A territory since 1912, Alaska was admitted into the union as our 49th state in 1959.

After 5 1/2 years, I left Alaska in December 1961, arriving in Santa Barbara, California. It was there that I met and married Maria, my wonderful wife of 34 years. She was a new American citizen, having relocated from her native country of Luxembourg, Germany. We have one son, a local Doctor of Chiropractic. In addition, we have two lovely granddaughters.

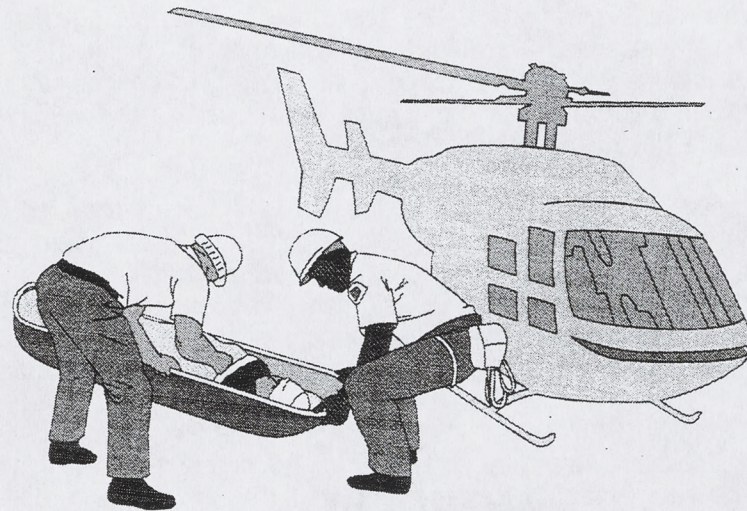
In 1979 we took up residence in Palm Desert and after 15 enjoyable years in the community, we moved to Palm Springs. We are now even closer to the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains that we love to hike. My hobbies, in addition to hiking, are tennis, table-tennis, and biking. Other activities are divided between volunteering at the Historical Society of Palm Desert, and the Sheriffs Desert Search and Rescue which requires many hours of training.

My memberships include: Coachella Valley Hiking Club, NASAE (National Association of Search and Rescue), DSSAR (Desert Sheriff's Search and Rescue), and Board Member of the Historical Society. Volunteering on Mondays, I also serve in the audio-visual position for the Society.

Awards and trophies that I acquired over the years include: bowling, sports car competition, and stock car racing. As a member of DSSAR, I share a trophy for the design and construction of an entry in the 1996 City of Palm Desert Golf Cart Parade. Our team also shares the Riverside County Sheriff's annual Volunteer Commendation Award, presented in 1996 by Sheriff Larry Smith.

In addition, I received a plaque from Lucky Stores commemorating 30 years of continuous service; Certificates of Appreciation from the Historical Society for participation in the annual Mini-Muster Program; and from the Rotary, a certificate honoring my volunteer work at the Vietnam Memorial Wall which was recently displayed in Palm Desert's city park.

On December 18, 1997 I received a Regional Access Project Foundation, Volunteer Appreciation Award. The award was presented in Palm Desert at the Quarterly Supervisor's Breakfast sponsored by the Coachella Valley Mexican American Chamber of Commerce.



Thanks, Roger, we appreciate all your help at the Society and applaud your work with the Search and Rescue team.

Care and Maintenance of Founder's Day Trophy Entrusted to Historical Society of Palm Desert

Marian Henderson made a presentation of the Clifford W. Henderson Founder's Day trophy to the Board of Directors at the January board meeting. Over three feet tall, this handsome piece features a winged figure, in recognition of her late husband's many achievements in the field of aviation. He became nationally famous as director of the National Air Races which were held after WWI, up until 1939.

Long before development of of Palm Desert, Cliff and his brother, Phil, built the Pan Pacific Auditorium in Los Angeles in 1935. Service in WWII followed as Cliff volunteered for the Air Corps and was sent to the North African desert. There he was Military Commissioner at Dakar. What happened after WWII when the Henderson brothers focussed their energies on the southern California desert is, as they say, HISTORY.

Marian, former film star, is the founder of Desert Beautiful. Well known and widely revered throughout the Coachella Valley for her faithful work and Desert Beautiful's success in all the desert communities, Marian is an Honorary Board Member of the Historical Society of Palm Desert.

Her presence greatly enlivened the board agenda. She explained the formation of a committee after Cliff's death which commissioned the bust on El Paseo. Every year since 1985 Marian has given a Founder's Day Award to an individual who has made unique and meaningful contributions to the City of Palm Desert. These honorees receive a plaque at a reception held each spring in May.

The Society is in the process of restoring the trophy and adding the full roster of names of past honorees to be inscribed on its base. A special case will be constructed for it. Meantime, you may be able to see the trophy at the Society office.

Do mark your calendar for the Founder's Day party on May 15. Invitations will be mailed. To accommodate more people, the venue has been changed from the small quarters at the Society to the pleasant meeting room of the Portola Community Center, the former library.

Other Board Business

General Membership luncheon - April 22 at Shadow Mountain Club, chair: Mary Safe.

Look for your invitation.

Life Membership - voted for Dolly Olesen.

Preservation projects underway by Jan Holmlund - a brochure, and restoration of "In the Palm of God's Hand" map for placement in Multi-Agency Library, etc.

Agenda items sparked reminiscences from Marian Henderson which we hope to amplify and share with Society members in future issues of the Hourglass.

5th annual Minimuster - fire safety program for Palm Desert third graders, to be expanded in 1998.

Recollection by Marian Henderson of the very first clean-up sponsored by Desert Beautiful at a Rancho Mirage school. The children eagerly gathered litter, the boys stuffing trash into their pockets and the girls gathering up their skirts as trash receptacles.

Founder's Day discussion - Marian paid warm tribute to Francis Morley, an honoree in 1992, who owned a stationery store on El Paseo and always said "Yes" when asked to help on any project. Mr. Morley died late last year.

IN MEMORIAM

Francis Morley
Hugh Givens

Aileen Walker
Maurice Smith
Maybell Lyon

Robert Lawman
Eleanor Carr
Elinor Neal

Marion Burgess
Harold Bromley

NEW MEMBERS

Contributing: Gary L. Hopper, D.D.S.

Business: Abel, Krieger & Wilmeth, CPAs

Family: Joe & Marie Perez / Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Hagerman / Max Dollard & James Kitsch

More People are Finding Their Way to the Old Fire Station

Bonnie Bowie, secretary, reports that there is an increase in visitors, twelve in one day recently. We are pleased by the interest in the videos and exhibits. Available research material is of interest to some. Al Gartner and his wife, Marion, active in the 29 Palms Historical Society, consulted our Society archives for information on Randall Henderson. Authored by Al, an article appeared in the Nov. 1997 issue of The Sun Runner.

Titled "Writer, Editor, Man of Vision Randall Henderson, Pioneer Editor of Desert Magazine," it marked the 60th anniversary of Desert Magazine. Randall Henderson and J. Wilson McKenney launched the magazine in El Centro during the depths of the Depression. They had paid subscriptions for 618, but a first printing of 7000 was ordered. The magazine moved to the fledgling community of Palm Desert in 1948. Randall was editor for 21 years, with a circulation of 32,000 when the magazine was sold in 1958. The Sierra Club made Henderson an honorary vice-president in 1947, a position he held until his death in 1970. In retirement, he had become Riverside County's leading conservationist. He authored innumerable articles on the desert as well as two books, "On Desert Trails" (1961) and "Sun, Sand and Solitude" (1968.)

Memories of Hal

Mr. & Mrs. Cloyd Duff of Livermore, CO and Fountain Hills, AZ visited the Society in December. Mrs. Duff is the former Margaret Kapp, sister of Hal Kapp. Hal died in 1980 at the age of 62. He had been a Marine Corps officer in radio communication and maintained his interest in ham radio after coming to Palm Desert. He was a moving force in the city and spearheaded one of the early drives for incorporation. He was the first president of the Historical Society of Palm Desert. Organizations which claimed his energies through the years included the Palm Desert Chamber of Commerce, the realtor's board, the Palm Desert Community Library Association, College of the Desert, the Palm Desert Rotary Club and various cultural groups. Kapp and his late wife, Ella Lou, were fine musicians who gave their talents freely for community events. They were directors of the Desert Opera Guild and Hal served as president of Coachella Valley Community Concerts from 1966-72. Jeannette Yoxsimer said it best of Hal at the time of his death, "If there was something worthwhile, Hal Kapp was usually involved."

A New Book, of Interest to All

More recently, Pat Laflin spent time with us, researching material for a book to be called a "Pictorial History of the Coachella Valley." She undertakes this loving effort under sponsorship of the Coachella Valley Historical Society. The history of the Laflin family is deeply rooted in the desert. Ben Sr. and Lucy, parents of Pat's husband, Ben, are remembered fondly hereabouts. Pat told us that she and Ben sold their ranch and date business in December, freeing her to concentrate on this coffee table type book which will contain over 250 photographs. Knowing Pat's work, it'll be a beauty. Publication date is projected for Nov. '98.

"Shaping the Desert"

This 4-part comprehensive series published by the Desert Sun newspaper appeared in the July/Sept/Nov/Dec 1997 issues. It contains an article written by Palm Desert Councilman and conservationist, Buford Crites. In it he quotes from the very first Desert Magazine editorial written by Randall Henderson in November, 1937. "There are Two Deserts" is an insight into Henderson's character. He contrasts the harsh desert of aridity and extreme temperatures to the ethereal desert of artists and naturalists. Crites adds a third desert, which he believes Henderson would acknowledge were he writing today. It is a human-dominated desert. The series is available as a set from the newspaper.

Note: Two Society stalwarts were ailing through the holidays. Best wishes to Florence Maxwell and Ginny Folkers. We're happy to report they are recovering and able to resume some duties.

Next board meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 25th, at 8:30 a.m. at the office. The bronze statue, boy and dog playing tug-of-war, is at our entry. The art walk, self-guided tour listing is not published yet, but the **Art Walk** is happening, first Friday of every month from 5-9 p.m. Our statue is #19. Enjoy!

Hourglass Editor,
Theda Lundquist